Extending/ Refining

The following illustration depicts the three levels of learning:

Once students acquire knowledge and skills, they need to **extend and refine** their knowledge by applying thinking skills toward their new knowledge and then use those skills and knowledge authentically and meaningfully.

**Extending and Refining Skills**

**Abstracting**

**Comparing/ Contrasting**

**Classifying/ Categorizing**

**Constructing Support**

**Analyzing Perspectives**

**Inductive Reasoning**

**Deductive Reasoning**

**Error Analysis**

**Suggested Skills Sequence**

**Thinking Skill Grades K – 5 Grades 6 - 12**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Comparing  Classifying  Induction  Deduction  Error Analysis  Abstracting  Constructing Support  Analyzing Perspectives | | alike/different; completing analogies  sorting; ordering  main idea; conclusions, summarize  predicting, cause/effect  elaborating, patterns, associating support for an opinion/ position  personal viewpoints | | Devising analogies/ metaphors  Ordering, attributing  Generalizing, hypothesizing  Categorical arguments  Bias, fallacies, credibility  Synectics (relationships)  Appeals to reason, persuasion  Personal and others’ viewpoints | |
|  | **Meets or Exceeds Expectations** | | **Almost There, Needs Fine Tuning** | | **New At it, or Inadequate Response** |
| **Direct Instruction of Skill** | Plans for extending thinking instruction on most important content information. Teaches skill through step-by-step process of what it is, when to use it, and uses multiple examples. | | Plans show random choices of content for extending thinking activities. Teaches extending thinking skill but usually does not extend information beyond current activity. | | Rarely plans for extending thinking due to “no time.” When it is planned, assigns activity using extending thinking skill with little or no explanation of skill. |
| **Indirect Instruction of Skill** | Consistently plans for multiple uses in classroom of extending thinking by using extending questions, writing structured around particular extending skills, and think aloud student reflections. | | Inconsistently planning for extending thinking activities. Knows, but inconsistently uses a variety of activities. | | Rarely has apparent planned extending thinking activities, or only uses random extending thinking questions. |
| **Student Use of Skill** | Students have multiple opportunities and assignments in which they use an extending thinking skill. They can and often do get an assignment and then choose the appropriate skill for the assignment. They can explain their reasoning for using thinking skills. | | Students have inconsistent opportunities to choose and or use extending thinking skills. Usually only extend information in a large group setting. | | Students only do the assignment. Rarely choose or can reason out the appropriate extending thinking skill. |

1. Learning concepts, skills, information is not a simple matter of “understanding” and being able to recall information or perform a set procedure. In the most effective learning environments, we have to extend and push our understanding and knowledge.
2. All the newer assessments use a large percentage of items focused on the extending and refining level of learning for question stems.
3. We do not extend and refine all knowledge. We focus these activities and instruction for the most important concepts and skills.

**Vocabulary**

* The ***singular importance of vocabulary*** has become a powerful insight to raising achievement.
* The words we know help us organize our learning.
* Vocabulary instruction should be a focal point of learning, especially for students impacted by poverty.
* Vocabulary instruction is an excellent advance organizer but also must be taught in context.
* **Vocabulary is the heart of writing and reading comprehension. Without vocabulary, students cannot do either!**

**Vocabulary Strategies:**

Vocabulary is best learned if taught with direct instruction as a preview and THEN re-taught in the context of the lesson. In doing direct instruction, teachers should use research-based strategies such as those listed below. Examples and how to us each of these strategies are in the ***Learning-Focused Strategies Notebook*** and the ***Catching Kids Up Notebook***. World Map or Charts

**Important:**

Students should NOT be given a list of words and be asked to look up definitions and to write sentences for each word. Research shows that this is a non-learning activity!

Students can use definitions and can write sentences in many of the research-based strategies. But there are many more components than just those two steps.

* Frayer Graphic Model
* Concept Maps
* Semantic Mapping
* World Sorts
* Cloze Sentences
* Vocabulary Elaboration Strategy
* Semantic Feature Analysis (Matrix)
* Multi-Sensory Vocabulary Strategy
* Pre-Reading Predictions
* Vocabulary Overview guide
* Concentration
* Suffixes/ Prefixes
* Often students have trouble starting with the abstract (such as definition). Try starting with examples and then going to the more abstract such as a definition or essential characteristics.
* **Vocabulary focus should be and must be from the curriculum, both narrative and expository content. Vocabulary is critical to student learning.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Meets or Exceeds Expectations** | **Almost There, Needs Fine Tuning** | **New At It, Or Inadequate Response** |
| **Classroom Organization** | Visual representation in classroom is graphic, well organized, and easy for students to use. Uses materials and information from training, plans for specific and meaningful use of strategies with students on a regular basis. | Visual representation is graphic but organization is confusing or hard to read. Uses materials from training but only makes use of 2 – 3 strategies on a random basis. | Vocabulary is apparent in classroom but consists of JUST word lists or word splashes. Assigns words for students to look up and write sentences. |
| **Direct Instruction** | Provides explicit and direct instruction to students on the purpose and use of the specific vocabulary strategy. | Briefly shows the vocabulary strategy to students before asking them to use the strategy. | Expects students to use a particular vocabulary strategy with no direct instruction on the how and why. Simply assigns the activity. |
| **Application** | Classroom evidence of multiple opportunities for students to apply the vocabulary in writing assignments, classroom discussions, and reading comprehension questions. | Classroom evidence of applying vocabulary to student writing and reading but it tends to be random. | Classroom evidence of writing and reading comprehension activities is minimal. |

**K- 5 Classrooms:**

* Vocabulary in the A – Z World Walls is coded by color or position designating frequency-in-print words (such as Dolch Sight Word List) and content words.
* Typically there are 1- 3 other types of word walls for content being learned at the present time. Think of the A – Z Word Wall as **Words We Know** and the content word wall(s) as **Words We are Learning**.
* A third type of word wall sometimes used by teachers is the focus Word Wall. That word wall focuses on particular content words, such as Verbs, or Nouns, or Math Words.
* Vocabulary in self-contained 4 – 5 classrooms tends to be categorized by area of the classroom. They may or may not have an A – Z Word Wall, but the focus is on content vocabulary.

**6 – 12 Subject Area Classrooms:**

* Typically a graphic Content Map of the current unit functions as the “word wall.”

**Writing**

**A consistent finding of the evaluations of exemplary schools is their universal implementation and focus on writing, especially “writing to inform.”**

**Writing is evidence of learning. Students who write as they are learning have to think more, process information at a higher level, and apply new knowledge sooner than students who focus on memorization.**

**If a school has a goal of school-wide high achievement with no achievement gaps, one of the best research-based strategies it can implement is a school-wide writing focus using the “Writing Look Fors” and “Writing Ask Abouts” as a planning and then monitoring guide.**

In order to assist with a school-wide or district-wide writing focus, Learning Concepts, Inc. offers a ***Learning-Focused Benchmarked Writing and Assessments Model***. The Model includes writing assignments benchmarked K-12. Each assignment has an assignment page, possible graphic organizers for pre-writing, exemplars, and a rubric for that assignment and grade level.

**Writing Assignments Keyed to Writing Standards Benchmarked By Grade Level**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Standard 1:**  **Information & Understanding** | **Standard 2:**  **Literary Response & Expression** | **Standard 3: Critical Analysis & Evaluation** | **Standard 4:**  **Social, Personal Interaction** |
| **All Courses/ Subjects 9-12** | Research Paper, Essay for: (Comparison, Classification, Problem/Solution, Thesis Proof, Cause/Effect), Journal Entry, Abstract | Journal Entry (Dialectical), Personal Response, Literary Analysis, Character Study | Argumentative Essay (Pro &/or Con), Editorial, Review, Persuasive Essay, Speech, Position Paper | Resume, Letter of Application, Interview |
| **All Courses/ Subjects 6-8** | Journal Entry, Essay for: (Comparison, Process, Deduction, Descriptive) Research or Lab Report, Summary | Journal Entry (Dialectical), Personal Response, Character Study, Book Review | Letter to the Editor, Editorial, Poetry Analysis, Persuasive Essay | Brochure, Business Letter, Interview |
| **All Courses/ Subjects 3-5** | Journal Entry, Summary, Narrative, “How To” Report, Biographical Sketch, Comparison Paper | Journal Entry (Supportive), Book Report, Descriptive Writing, Story Patterns (Legends, Myths, Folk Tales) | Persuasive Letter, Paragraphs Expressing Opinion/ Point of View With Evidence | Business Letter Request, Social Correspondence (Friendly letter, Cards, Notes, Pen Pals) |
| **All Courses/ Subjects K-2** | Journal Entry, Personal Narrative, Simple Directions, Descriptive Paragraph, Statements of Information | Journal Entry (Supportive), Book Summary, Story Patterns | Sentences Expressing Opinion/ Point of View With Evidence | Friendly Letter (Pen Pals, Thank You Notes, Invitations) Sentences Expressing Personal Feelings |

**Reading Comprehension**

The RAND Report on Reading Comprehension, prepared for the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Educational Research & Improvement, 2002, stated that…

“***While early reading programs are critical, they only form the foundation of being a proficient reader. It is critical that students receive explicit instruction of reading comprehension skills in both narrative and expository text.***” The report further stated that… “**teachers foster comprehension development when they connect comprehension strategy instruction with in-depth learning of content. Explicit instruction in such strategies as comprehension questioning derived from specific reading skills, summarizing, comprehension monitoring, and using graphic organizers can help poor readers learn to retain, organize, and store the information they read.**”

In order to assist with reading comprehension, Learning Concepts, Inc. offers a ***Reading Comprehension Flip Chart*** with Teacher’s Handbook. The Flip Chart has key vocabulary, tips for teaching, comprehension questions, and 2-4 graphic organizers for each of the above skills. It can be used in grades K-12 with only minimal professional development. The Handbook (either K-5 or 6-12) has more detailed explanations with example lessons and assessments.

**Key Reading Comprehension Skills:**

* **Main Idea**
* **Sequencing**
* **Compare/ Contrast**
* **Fact/ Opinion**
* **Cause/ Effect**
* **Inferencing and Contextual Clues**
* **Literary Elements**

**We build comprehension by:**

* **Explicit instruction** of the strategy including how and when it should be used
* **Teacher modeling**  of the strategy in action
* **Guided practice** (not homework) using the strategy with gradual movement to independent practice and use
* Use of **strategy-based graphic organizers** to assist and guide readers as they read (for instance, using a story map when reading narrative text or using a compare/contrast organizer when reading about 2 countries in social studies).
* Using the **text structure** to determine the organizer.
* Providing **systematic** pre-reading, during reading, and after reading activities focused on comprehension.
* **Previewing key vocabulary** as part of the pre-reading activity.
* Providing a school-wide system for **monitoring student progress** in reading comprehension.